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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING



THOMAS D. WATKINS, JR.  
SUPERINTENDENT OF  
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

August 6, 2002

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Thomas D. Watkins, Jr., Chairperson

SUBJECT: Approval of Performance Standards (Cut Scores) for MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program

Over the past few years, Michigan has been working diligently to comply with a variety of federal and state requirements related to the assessment of students with disabilities and accountability. The development of MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program, and the approval of the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS) have enabled the state to move toward compliance with these requirements (See Exhibit A – Overview of MI-Access).

- The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997* (IDEA) requires that students with disabilities be included in *all* state assessments, with assessment accommodations as necessary. It also requires states to administer an alternate assessment to all students whose Individualized Education Program Teams (IEPTs) have determined it is not appropriate for them to take the general state assessment. By developing MI-Access, Michigan has complied with both of these requirements.
- The recently passed *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB) also requires that *all* students—including those with disabilities and limited English language proficiencies—be assessed. In addition, it requires states to have a single accountability system that includes all students. Michigan complied with this new legislation—even before its passage—by creating the MEAS (which includes the MEAP, MI-Access, and ELL-Access). The MEAS states that each local and intermediate school district and public school academy *must* ensure the participation of *all* students in the state's assessment system.
- *Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1994*, now embedded in NCLB, requires states to develop a single assessment system. Again, because of the State Board of Education's adoption of the MEAS, Michigan is in compliance with this legislation.
- Finally, because of the data that will be gathered through the MEAS—which includes previously uncollected data on the assessment of students with disabilities—the state will now have the information it needs to meet the student achievement component of the State Board-approved *Education Yes! – A Yardstick for Excellent Schools*.

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## **MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program**

Phase 1 MI-Access assessments were administered for the first time statewide in winter 2002. In order to report MI-Access results, one last important step must take place—the approval of performance standards. Once this final step is complete, MI-Access reports can be produced and provided to districts to help teachers teach and children learn.

Performance standard setting meetings for MI-Access took place in April 2002. Standard setting panels—comprised of interested, qualified stakeholders—made recommendations as to what they believed the cut scores should be. These recommendations were provided to the MI-Access Content Advisory and Sensitivity Review Committees for comment and review. They then were shared with the MI-Access Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is comprised of national assessment and special education experts. The TAC was charged with making final recommendations for review by the Michigan Department of Education. (The final recommendations are contained in Exhibit A.)

It is recommended that the State Board of Education: Approve the performance standard cut scores recommended by the MI-Access Technical Advisory Committee, based on the recommendations of standard setting panels, for MI-Access Participation and MI-Access Supported Independence assessments, as attached as Exhibit A of the Superintendent's memorandum dated August 6, 2002.

## MI-Access Standard Setting Overview

Phase 1 MI-Access assessments were administered statewide during the winter of 2002. In order to report MI-Access results, one last important step must take place the approval of the performance standards. Once that step is complete, MI-Access reports can be produced and provided to districts to help teachers teach and children learn.

Performance standard setting is the process used to determine the criteria for calculating how a student has done on each of the components assessed in the MI-Access assessments. In order to set performance standards, correspondence for nominating standard setting panel members was disseminated to all District MI-Access Coordinators, the State Special Education Advisory Committee, and at professional conferences. It also was posted on the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) web site. Over 75 nominations were received from across the state.

Performance standard-setting meetings took place in April 2002. There were two panels—one for MI-Access Participation and one for MI-Access Supported Independence. Each panel was comprised of three “sub panels”- one each for ages 9/10, 13/14, and 17/18. The sub panels met for two days each. The panel members included stakeholders, such as classroom teachers (special and general education), building level administrators, parents, special education directors, related services staff, and school psychologists.

The recommendations made by the performance standard-setting panels were then provided to the MI-Access Content Advisory Committee and the Sensitivity Review Committee for comment and review. They were then shared with the MI-Access Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which is comprised of national assessment and special education experts. The TAC was charged with making the final recommendation for review by the Michigan Department of Education. The final recommendations can be found on page 2.

Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates, Inc. (BETA) conducted the MI-Access standard setting meetings according to the steps provided to the State Board of Education at its March 14, 2002 meeting. BETA has conducted similar standard setting meetings in 16 other states.

Following are the three performance categories students can achieve on MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence assessments and a brief description of what those categories mean.

### *Performance Category Descriptions - MI-Access Participation*

Performance Category	Description
Surpassed the Performance Standard	The student performed as expected or more than expected on the <b>most</b> , <b>if not all</b> , of the performance requirements for the assessment activities.
Attained the Performance Standard	The student performed as expected or more than expected on <b>many</b> of the assessment activities.
Emerging Toward the Performance Standard	The student did as expected or more than expected on <b>few</b> of the assessment activities.

*Performance Category Descriptions - MI-Access Supported Independence*

<b>Performance Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Surpassed the Performance Standard	The student performed <b>most, if not all</b> , of the assessment activities with <b>less than</b> the allowable assistance.
Attained the Performance Standard	The student performed <b>many</b> of the assessment activities <b>with allowable assistance or less than</b> the allowable assistance.
Emerging Toward the Performance Standard	The student performed <b>most, if not all</b> of the assessment activities with <b>more than</b> the allowable assistance.

**Summary Of Recommendations Of The MI-Access Technical Advisory Committee**

(Based on consideration of all of the MI-Access performance standard-setting panel recommendations.)

*MI-Access Participation*

<b>Performance Category</b>	<b>Ages 9 and 10 N=6</b>	<b>Ages 9 and 10 N=8</b>	<b>Ages 13 and 14 N=8</b>	<b>Ages 17 and 18 N=8</b>
<b>Surpassed the Performance Standard</b>	5-6	7-8	7-8	7-8
<b>Attained the Performance Standard</b>	3-4	4-6	4-6	4-6
<b>Emerging Toward the Performance Standard</b>	0-2	0-3	0-3	0-3

*MI-Access Supported Independence*

<b>Performance Category</b>	<b>Ages 9 and 10</b>	<b>Ages 13 and 14</b>	<b>Ages 17 and 18</b>
<b>Surpassed the Performance Standard</b>	7-8	7-8	7-8
<b>Attained the Performance Standard</b>	4-6	4-6	5-6
<b>Emerging Toward the Performance Standard</b>	0-3	0-3	0-4

*MI-Access Participation  
Standard Setting Panel - Round 3 Ratings*

(Performance Expectations and ages combined for Attained and Surpassed the Performance Standard)

# of Yes's Possible	Ages 9 and 10		Ages 13 and 14		Ages 17 and 18	
	Attained	Surpassed	Attained	Surpassed	Attained	Surpassed
8			0		0	0
7			0	29	0	28
6	0	0	0	11	0	7
5	0	40	2	0	12	1
4	0	0	21	0	12	0
3	29	0	12	0	12	0
2	11	0	3	0	0	0
1	0	0	2	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Number of Ratings</b>	40	40	40	40	36	36
<b>Mean Rating</b>	3	5	4	7	4	7
<b>Median Rating</b>	2.7	5	3.4	6.7	4.0	6.8

*MI-Access Participation  
Standard Setting Panel - Round 3 Ratings*

(Performance Expectations and ages combined for Attained and Surpassed the Performance Standard)

# of Yes's Possible	Ages 9 and 10 (PEs with 6 points possible)		Ages 9, 10 13, 14 17 and 18 (PEs with 8 points possible)	
	Attained	Surpassed	Attained	Surpassed
8			0	0
7			0	70
6	0	0	0	25
5	0	40	16	1
4	0	0	41	0
3	29	0	33	0
2	11	0	4	0
1	0	0	2	0
0	0	0	0	0
<b>Number of Ratings</b>	40	40	70	70
<b>Mean Rating</b>	3	5	4	7
<b>Median Rating</b>	2.7	5.0	3.7	6.7

*MI-Access Supported Independence  
Standard Setting Panel - Round 3 Ratings*

(Performance Expectations and ages combined for Attained and Surpassed the Performance Standard)

# of Yes's Possible	Ages 9 and 10		Ages 13 and 14		Ages 17 and 18	
	Attained	Surpassed	Attained	Surpassed	Attained	Surpassed
8	0	3	0	20	0	8
7	0	71	0	52	0	76
6	1	28	0	12	2	0
5	7	0	10	0	47	0
4	55	0	39	0	36	0
3	34	0	29	0	5	0
2	5	0	6	0	0	0
1	0	0	2	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0	0

<b>Number of Ratings</b>	102	102	84	84	90	90
<b>Mean Rating</b>	4	7	4	7	5	7
<b>Median Rating</b>	3.7	6.8	3.6	7.1	4.5	7.0

# of Yes's Possible	Ages 9, 10 13, 14 17 and 18	
	Attained	Surpassed
8	0	31
7	0	199
6	3	46
5	64	0
4	130	0
3	68	0
2	11	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
<b>Number of Ratings</b>	276	276
<b>Mean Rating</b>	4	7
<b>Median Rating</b>	3.9	6.9

## OVERVIEW OF MI-ACCESS

### Program Description

MI-Access is one component of the Michigan Educational Assessment System (MEAS), which was adopted by the State Board of Education in October 18, 2001. Other components of the MEAS include the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP), which has been in place for nearly thirty years, and ELL-Access (for English Language Learners). The MEAS is designed to provide opportunities for *all* students—including those with disabilities and limited English language proficiencies—to participate in appropriate and meaningful state assessments.

Within the MEAS, MI-Access is the state's standardized assessment designed specifically for students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program Teams (IEPTs) have determined that the MEAP is not appropriate for them, even with assessment accommodations.

The purpose of MI-Access is to provide teachers, parents, and other stakeholders with a point-in-time picture of what students know and are able to do. The activities selected for inclusion in the assessment—all of which were designed with input from classroom teachers—are applicable to real world situations, that is, they reflect skills students will need to be successful in school and in adult life roles.

### MI-Access Partners with BETA/TASA

Because developing an entirely new assessment program is such a huge undertaking, MI-Access staff partnered with Beck Evaluation and Testing Associates/Touchstone Applied Science Associates (BETA/TASA). It has provided assistance with the implementation and the development of both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 assessments. It was BETA/TASA's comparatively small size, dedication to customer service, and extensive assessment expertise that led the Michigan Department of Education (MDE), in November 2000, to award them the MI-Access contract.

In that role, BETA/TASA is responsible for providing numerous, diverse services—all of which help make MI-Access work. At the ground level, BETA/TASA is involved in developing, designing, producing and printing nearly all of the MI-Access training, assessment, and communication materials—everything from scan sheets and assessment booklets to newsletters and feedback forms.

BETA/TASA employees also collate, compile, and ship training and assessment materials to Michigan schools and districts and manage any other large-scale MI-Access mailings. BETA/TASA also processes completed assessment materials. Once District MI-Access Coordinators ship their used assessment materials back, BETA/TASA receives, inventories, and scans them, using equipment specially designed for that purpose. They also score the assessment materials, produce reports, and send the results back to Michigan districts.

Throughout the assessment process, the company also

- provides on site staffing;
- works collaboratively with MI-Access staff and other team members, each with their own specialized expertise; and
- prints and distributes technical assistance materials.

While TASA handles the operational functions just described, BETA's expertise in assessment development and technical issues has been essential to MI-Access. For example, its staff serves an advisory role to MI-Access staff, providing advice and assistance on all technical aspects of MI-Access, such as standard setting, content validity, and research.

It is the considerable and broad skills of BETA/TASA's employees, along with their commitment to creating a quality work product, that makes MI-Access successful. The company is not a typical educational monolith where names are rarely put to faces or where machinery manages the final product. Instead, the people at BETA/TASA are experienced, friendly, and, whenever possible, they want to help.

The MDE believes these characteristics are critical to the success of a new state assessment program. That is why BETA/TASA was chosen to help develop and implement MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program.

### **Program Development**

MI-Access was developed, in part, in response to the overriding belief that *all* students deserve full access to achievement. One way to help students achieve is to decide what they need to learn and develop assessment opportunities to determine whether they are learning it.

For many years, the only statewide assessment available to students in Michigan was the MEAP, which even with assessment accommodations is not appropriate for everyone. As a result, the MDE's Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services (OSE/EIS) began developing an alternate assessment, which is now called MI-Access.

To start the process, the MDE referred to the State Board of Education, which in November 1998 approved the use of specific components of *Addressing the Unique Educational Needs of Students with Disabilities* (AUEN) as a framework for developing Michigan's alternate assessment. The AUEN components were chosen because they provide teachers with effective tools and strategies to help students access the general curriculum. MI-Access also builds upon such things as the Michigan Model Content Standards contained in the Michigan Curriculum Framework and research supported by the Council for Exceptional Children.

Given the student population taking part in MI-Access, the assessment was designed differently than most standardized assessments. For example, MI-Access is not a paper and pencil test like the MEAP. Instead, MI-Access uses teacher observation, which means students are observed as they carry out a standard set of activities during the normal course of a school day. Then, teachers score students using a standardized scoring guide (which, on some assessments, can be individualized for a particular student).

Given the enormity and importance of the task of developing a completely new assessment program, the MDE decided to develop and implement MI-Access in two phases. Phase 1, which was administered for the first time statewide in winter 2002, includes two assessments—(1) MI-Access Participation and (2) MI-Access Supported Independence.

#### **Phase 1: MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence Assessments**

MI-Access *Participation* assessments are for students who have, or function as if they have, *severe* cognitive impairment. These students are expected to require extensive, ongoing support in adulthood. They also have significant cognitive and physical limitations that impede their ability to generalize or transfer learning, and thus render determining their abilities and skills difficult. For that reason, the *Participation* assessments focus on how a student responds to the opportunity to participate in an activity rather than on how well he or she carries out that activity.

MI-Access *Supported Independence* assessments are designed for students who have, or function as if they have, *moderate* cognitive impairment. These students are expected to require ongoing support in adulthood. They may also have cognitive impairments that impact their ability to generalize or transfer learning; however, they likely can follow learned routines and demonstrate independent living skills. The *Supported Independence* assessments, therefore, are designed to provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their skills. Specifically, they measure how students perform certain tasks while acknowledging that they may require some allowable level of assistance to do so.



Phase 1 MI-Access assessments—Participation and Supported Independence—are administered once each year to students who are 9, 10, 13, 14, 17, and 18 years old. Students must be that age on or before December 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year in which the assessment is carried out. These ages were selected because (1) most students taking part in MI-Access Participation and Supported Independence are not assigned a grade level, and (2) they ensure that students with disabilities are assessed with the same frequency as general education students as required by IDEA 97 (that is, they correspond with the grades assessed by the MEAP).

### **Phase 2: Additional MI-Access Assessments**

In Phase 2, Michigan is developing a third component of MI-Access for students whose IEP Teams have determined it is not appropriate for them to take part in the MEAP, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation, or MI-Access Supported Independence. This involves an exceptionally wide range of students.

For example, the majority of students taking part in Phase 2 MI-Access will be those who have, or function as if they have, *mild* cognitive impairment. These students are capable of meeting their own needs and living successfully in their communities without overt support from others. They also are able to assess their personal strengths and limitations and access resources, strategies, supports, and linkages that will help them maximize their potential effectiveness.

Other students, however, may not have *cognitive* impairments but may have other disabilities that their IEPT has determined will interfere with their ability to participate fully and appropriately in the MEAP even with assessment accommodations.

Phase 2 MI-Access assessments—which will be administered by grade instead of age—are currently under development. As required by federal law, the assessments will include the subject areas of English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, and a life skill component. These assessments will be based on the State Board approved Model Content Standards. The assessments will not be based solely on teacher observation like Phase 1 MI-Access assessments, but instead will incorporate a range of formats suitable to the student population being assessed. It is expected that Phase 2 MI-Access assessments will be administered for the first time statewide in winter 2005.

Given the range of assessments available, one must keep in mind that it is the responsibility of a student's IEPT to determine in which of the state's assessments (the MEAP, the MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access Participation, MI-Access Supported Independence, or eventually Phase 2 MI-Access assessments) a student will take part. Until Phase 2 MI-Access assessments are developed, IEPTs must determine, as required by IDEA 97, how students eligible for Phase 2 MI-Access will be assessed.

### **Stakeholder Input**

MI-Access was developed through a rigorous process dating back to 1998. It involved MDE staff as well as numerous other qualified Michigan stakeholders, ranging from special and general education classroom teachers, administrators, and special education specialists to service providers, legal experts, parents, and academics. The assessment development process also included input from a specially convened group of nationally known psychometricians (educational assessment and research experts).

Stakeholders involved in the process were divided into 7 committees, each of which was charged with specific tasks and responsibilities. These committees, which are described below, continue to meet as Phase 2 MI-Access assessments are developed and Phase 1 assessments are refined.

- **Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC)**

The AAAC is responsible for providing advice to MDE/OSE/EIS on the development, implementation, and reporting of MI-Access. This includes such activities as drafting proposed assessment plans for field review and comment and developing alternate assessment specifications. One of the AAAC's first tasks was to write a *Proposed Plan for the Development of Alternate Assessments for Students Receiving Special Education Services*, which has been used as a blueprint for the entire project.

- **Phase 1 Content Advisory Committee (CAC)**

The Phase 1 CAC is comprised of members of the other MI-Access committees (except the Sensitivity Review Committee), as well as additional practitioners familiar with assessment and/or the students taking MI-Access. The CAC is responsible for making recommendations to MDE/OSE/EIS as to which AUEN components should be assessed by the *state* as opposed to those that are more appropriately assessed by the *local* school district. In addition, the CAC is responsible for reviewing MI-Access activities and assessment materials prior to implementation and distribution. The CAC's review process ensures that the assessment activities included in MI-Access assessments are valid because they (1) accurately reflect the identified AUEN components, (2) meet specifications for conceptual accuracy and completeness, and (3) are age-appropriate.

- **Activity Development Teams (ADTs)**

ADTs are comprised of Michigan educators familiar with the students taking part in MI-Access. Each ADT includes two or three educators who work collaboratively to draft assessment activities. The activities are based on the specifications determined by the AAAC. The ADTs are required to participate in three workshops throughout the activity development period in which they receive continuous guidance and feedback from the MDE.

- **Phase 2 Assessment Plan Writing Team (WT)**

The Phase 2 Assessment Plan Writing Team is comprised of a subgroup of the AAAC and additional practitioners familiar with the student who will be assessed using the Phase 2 MI-Access assessments. This team is charged with developing the *draft* Phase 2 Assessment Plan that will describe who will be assessed, what will be assessed and how, when the assessment will take place, the assessment formats (including prototype items) and how the assessments will be reported. Part of the process of putting the plan together is determining what State Board approved content standards will be assessed. In addition, the team is reviewing the benchmarks and "extending" them, as needed, for the population being assessed by MI-Access. The draft plan will go out for field review and comment fall 2002.

- **Phase 2 Content Advisory Committee (CAC)**

The Phase 2 Content Advisory Committee has the similar responsibilities as the Phase 1 CAC. The committee is comprised of many of the Phase 2 Assessment Plan Writing Team members and additional practitioners familiar with the students being assessed by the Phase 2 MI-Access assessments. The Phase 2 CAC has determined what AUEN Performance Expectations are assessable by MI-Access and have linked them to Michigan's Model Content Standards. The Phase 2 CAC, like the Phase 1 CAC, will be responsible for reviewing the Phase 2 MI-Access assessment items and materials prior to implementation and distribution. The CAC's review process ensures that the assessment activities included in MI-Access assessments are valid because they (1) accurately reflect the identified content standards, (2) meet specifications for conceptual accuracy and completeness, and (3) are age-appropriate.

- **Sensitivity Review Committee (SRC)**

The SRC is responsible for reviewing all MI-Access activities to prevent any bias or discrimination with regard to disability, age, race, and gender. In addition, it looks for any issues that, because of their sensitive nature, may not be appropriate for a statewide assessment. To ensure an independent review, none of the SRC members are allowed to be part of any other MI-Access committee.

- **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)**

The TAC provides the MDE with technical and research advice related to the development, implementation, reporting, and ongoing evaluation of MI-Access. TAC members are drawn from a pool of national assessment experts and are instrumental in providing technical assistance and direction to the assessment development process. The OSE/EIS involved these many and diverse stakeholders in developing MI-Access because it wanted to ensure that the alternate assessment (1) was as broad-based as possible, and (2) accurately reflected the ideas and experiences of the people who are actively involved with the students participating in MI-Access.

## **FEDERAL AND STATE INFLUENCES ON MI-ACCESS**

### **Federal Initiatives**

Several federal legislative initiatives helped spur the development of MI-Access. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA), for example, requires that students with disabilities be included in all state assessments with assessment accommodations, as necessary. In addition, it mandates that an alternate assessment be developed and administered for students for whom their IEP Team determines it is not appropriate to take the general state assessment. MI-Access is the "alternate assessment" that Michigan developed to comply with this legislation.

Other federal requirements also influenced, and continue to influence, the development of MI-Access. Those laws include Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1994, and most recently the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In different ways, these laws maintain that assessments are an integral part of the educational accountability system because they provide valuable information that can benefit all students by regularly measuring their progress against agreed-upon standards. They also maintain that all students—including those with disabilities—should be part of a *single* assessment system and should not be treated separately.

### **State Initiatives**

MI-Access also was developed to help achieve various State Board of Education (SBE) policies, priorities, and goals. For example, SBE *policies* related to statewide assessment ask that the state (1) coordinate and focus all resources on improving student performance; (2) set performance expectations and measure progress; and (3) base accreditation on high levels of pupil achievement and continuous improvement. SBE *priorities* related to statewide assessment also ask that the state (1) raise student achievement in Michigan, and (2) promote options designed to improve student achievement [such as assessment]. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the SBE has two *goals* that relate specifically to MI-Access. They ask that the state (1) increase the participation and performance of students with disabilities on statewide assessments, and (2) develop guidelines for alternate assessments for students for whom participation in the MEAP is not appropriate.

Furthermore, in October 2001, when the SBE adopted a policy creating the MEAS, it stated that:

"It shall be the policy of the State Board of Education that each local and intermediate school district and public school academy will ensure the participation of *all* students in the Michigan Educational Assessment System [the MEAP, MEAP with assessment accommodations, MI-Access, and ELL-Access]."

Finally, data that will be gathered through the MEAS—which includes previously uncollected data on the assessment of students with disabilities—the state will now have the information it needs to meet the student achievement component of the State Board-approved *Education Yes! – A Yardstick for Excellent Schools*.

MI-Access helps to achieve all of these policies, priorities, and goals in a number of ways. It provides (1) access to the high standards reflected in Michigan's Model Content Standards for the general curriculum; (2) access to the statewide assessment system, which many students with disabilities have not previously had; and (3) access to meaningful results showing student progress.

## ASSESSMENT DESIGN

To understand how students taking part in the Phase 1 MI-Access assessments are scored, it is first important to know how the assessments are designed. The following explanation uses an age 9 Participation assessment as an example, but the overall design elements are included on all MI-Access assessments.

1. Each Phase 1 assessment—Participation and Supported Independence—includes two or three overall *Performance Expectations* (PEs) or what students of a particular age should know and be able to do. For example, PE 2 in a sample *MI-Access Participation Age 9* assessment booklet might be “engage in typical patterns of interaction.”
2. For each PE, students are observed while taking part in three or more standardized *Activities*—activities on which all students in the state of that age will be assessed. For example, for Activity 1 in PE 2, a teacher might observe a student as he or she greets a familiar authority figure entering the classroom. This activity is closely tied to the PE of engaging in typical patterns of interaction.
3. Each assessment activity takes place in a different *Context* or situation. For example, Activity 1 in PE 2 might take place in the classroom, whereas Activity 2 might take place when the student enters the building and greets his or her peers. The PE is the same—engage in typical patterns of interaction—but the activities (interacting with an authority figure versus interacting with peers) and the contexts (the classroom versus the school entrance hall) are different.
4. As the student takes part in an activity, the observer looks for two or three specific behaviors or *Performance Requirements* (PRs). For example, in the hypothetical Activity 1 PE 2, the teacher is looking for two PRs: (1) how the student *initiates* the activity, and (2) whether the student's *conduct* is safe and appropriate during the activity.
5. Each activity is observed two times in order to provide students with more than one opportunity to demonstrate their skill. (This is another way in which MI-Access differs from the MEAP.)

The design of MI-Access determines the number of items on which a student is scored. For example, on the sample *MI-Access Participation Age 9* assessment, within PE 2 there are four activities and two observations of each activity. That is equivalent to 8 observations or “assessment items” for that PE.

## SCORING

### Scoring Guides

After an observation is complete, the student's teacher or related services staff person scores the student using a standardized scoring guide.

#### *Participation*

Following is the standardized scoring guide used for MI-Access Participation assessments.

#### MI-Access Participation Scoring Guide

##### Score Points

- 4. *More* than expected for this student
- 3 *As expected* for this student: waves hands and makes soft vocalizations
- 2 *Less* than expected for this student
- 1 Not evident

Before an observation, the student's teacher of record determines the activity—as prescribed in the MI-Access assessment booklet—on which he or she will observe the student during that particular school day. Then, using general data provided by the student's IEPT, the teacher fills in the blank line next to the number three. (See example above.) This is how the standardized Participation scoring guide is individualized to each student.

To determine “as expected” for this student, the teacher and the student's IEPT must take into account the student's individual participation and response mode, or in other words, how he or she generally responds or behaves in specific settings and during specific activities. That response, however, even if typical, must not interfere with the completion of the assessment activity or cause harm to the student or others in the classroom.

Then, for each PR within an activity, the teacher will give the student

- a4 if the student does more than expected,
- a3 if the student does as expected,
- a2 2 if the student does less than expected, and
- a1 if the student does not engage in the activity at all.

#### *Supported Independence*

Following is the standardized scoring guide used for MI-Access Supported Independence assessments.

#### MI-Access Supported Independence Scoring Guide

##### Score Points

- 4 *less* than allowable assistance
- 3 *an allowable* level of assistance
- 2 *more* than allowable assistance
- 1 Not evident

Before the observation, the student's teacher of record consults Table 1 to see what types of assistance are allowed during the assessment for students of a certain age.

<p align="center"><b>TABLE 1</b> <i>Supported Independence: Levels of Allowable Assistance</i></p>		
	Ages 9, 10, 13, 14 and 17	Age 18
<b>Assistive/Adaptive Aids:</b> Materials to help the student perform the target behavior without the intervention of another individual at the time the student is participating in the activity.	Allowable	Allowable
<b>Supervision:</b> Being watched by another person or having another person in the immediate vicinity as the student performs the target behavior.	Allowable	Allowable
<b>Prompting:</b> Verbal or physical cues from another person in order to encourage the student to continue effort or get back on track (e.g., saying "good" or "keep going").	Allowable	No
<b>Directions:</b> Specific step-by-step directions.	No	No
<b>Physical Assistance:</b> Physical help from another individual. *	No	No
<p>*Physical help from another individual is allowable only when the student is physically limited and/or sensory impaired, and the student is capable of directing and then receiving assistance from another person (this may include the use of assistive or adaptive aids).</p>		


Using the information in the table, the teacher will give the student

- a 4 if he or she carries out the activity with less than allowable assistance,
- a 3 if he or she carries out activity with allowable assistance,
- a 2 if he or she carries out the activity with more than allowable assistance, and
- a 1 if he or she does not engage in the activity.

### Assessment Scores

The Performance Requirement (PR) scores, which are determined using the 1-4 scales just described, are used collectively to determine whether or not a student "meets the criterion" for a particular activity during a particular observation. The total number of times a student "meets the criterion" then determines how the student is scored overall for the Performance Expectation (PE). Remember, students do not receive an overall score on the entire assessment, but an overall performance score for each PE. (See Table 2 and the subsequent explanation.)

NOTE: The following is an example developed *prior* to the State Board of Education (SBE) approving the final cut scores for the performance categories. Once the cut scores have been approved the example will reflect the cut scores approved by the SBE.

<b>TABLE 2</b> <b>Partial Individual Student Report</b> <b>(PE 1, Activities 1-4, MI-Access Participation Age 9)</b>						
Performance Expectation 2: Engage in typical patterns of Interaction  <b>Overall Performance: "Surpassed"</b> PE Score: 7 (out of 8) Observations "meet criterion"						
				Observation Scores for each Performance Requirement		
Activity	Context	Observation	Meets Criterion	Communicate	Participate	Conduct
1	Interacting with peers	1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Yes Yes	4 3	3 3	3 3
2	Interacting with familiar authority figures	1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Yes Yes	3 3	3 3	4 3
3	Participating in instructional activities	1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Yes Yes	3 3	4 3	3 3
4	Participating in group physical activities	1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup>	No Yes	3 3	2 3	4 4
<b>Performance Requirement Scores:</b>				7	5	8

In Table 2:

- The area with a star shows where the score points from the scoring guides are recorded by activity and observation (across each row).
- The row with an oval shows the total PR scores summed down the columns (or the total number of 3s and 4s the student received). While these are not used to determine the student's overall performance, they may provide valuable insights for instructional use.

- If a student gets 3s and 4s on every PR within an activity and observation, a “Yes” is recorded in the column titled “Meets Criterion” for that activity. If not, a “No” is recorded. (See the column with a diamond.)
- If a student receives a certain range of yeses—which varies by PE and age—then he or she is said to have either “*Surpassed the Performance Standard*” for that PE, “*Attained the Performance Standard*” for that PE, or is “*Emerging Toward the Performance Standard*” for that PE.
- In the example in Table 2, the student “Surpassed the Performance Standard” for PE 2 because he or she received 7 out of a possible 8 Yeses. (See the box with the arrow.) Students receive a score on each PE but not an overall score for the assessment.

### **Performance Expectation Scores**

As previously mentioned, there are three levels of achievement—or performance categories—a student can reach per PE: (1) Surpassed the Performance Standard, (2) Attained the Performance Standard, or (3) Emerging toward the Performance Standard. The cut scores—or the minimum number of yeses—a student must receive in order to attain one of these performance categories varies by (1) assessment (Participation or Supported Independence), and (2) age.

### **PERFORMANCE STANDARD SETTING**

To determine what it means to *Surpass*, *Attain*, or *Emerge Toward* a performance standard, the MDE involved stakeholders—including classroom teachers (special and general education), building level administrators, parents, special education directors, school psychologists, and related support staff—in an intensive standard setting process. The process was conducted by BETA/TASA—the MI-Access operational contractor—and involved more than 75 people who were nominated by their school districts to participate. The nominees were divided into two panels—one for MI-Access Participation and another for MI-Access Supported Independence. Each panel met for two days.

The standard setting process worked as follows:

- The entire group heard a presentation by MDE/OSE/EIS and watched the MI-Access PREVIEW videotape (version 2), which explained MI-Access, why it was developed, and how it was designed. They then watched another video showing teachers observing students involved in relevant MI-Access activities.
- The entire group also heard presentations on how the score points from the MI-Access assessments would translate into score reports, what terminology had been selected to describe the three levels of student performance, and how the standard setting process works.
- The full group was then divided into three sub-panels (arranged according to assessment ages 9/10, 13/14, and 17/18) and asked to add more concrete meaning to the performance categories (Surpassed, Attained, and Emerging Toward). After that, the panelists independently made an initial expert judgement about cut scores (or, in other words, where the lines should be drawn between the minimum number of “Yeses” needed to Surpass, Attain, or Emerge toward the performance standard).

The reports are either to the District Superintendent or the District MI-Access Coordinator depending on the option chosen by the district. To preserve student anonymity, summary reports are provided only in those districts where ten or more students of the same age take part in the assessment. Certain reports – including the Listing Reports, Summary Reports, and Participation Rate Reports – will be rolled up to produce corresponding state reports



*Performance Category Descriptions - MI-Access Participation*

<b>Performance Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Surpassed the Performance Standard	The student performed as expected or more than expected on <b>most, if not all</b> , of the performance requirements for the assessment activities.
Attained the Performance Standard	The student performed as expected or more than expected on <b>many</b> of the assessment activities.
Emerging Toward the Performance Standard	The student did as expected or more than expected on <b>few</b> of the assessment activities.

*Performance Category Descriptions - MI-Access Supported Independence*

<b>Performance Category</b>	<b>Description</b>
Surpassed the Performance Standard	The student performed <b>most, if not all</b> , of the assessment activities with <b>less than</b> the allowable assistance.
Attained the Performance Standard	The student performed <b>many</b> of the assessment activities with <b>allowable assistance or less than</b> the allowable assistance.
Emerging Toward the Performance Standard	The student performed <b>most, if not all</b> of the assessment activities with <b>more than</b> the allowable assistance.

- During the second day, sub-panelists discussed their initial judgements with their peers, internalized the feedback, and made a second round of judgements.
- After the second round, the panelists discussed their judgements again. They also reviewed impact data from the 2001 administration of MI-Access (in selected districts) to see roughly how many students would fall into each performance category if their second-round judgements were adopted.
- Once the data were presented and discussed, the panelists made a final round of judgements to (1) increase the reliability of the judgements, (2) increase panelists' level of comfort with and confidence in their determinations, and (3) encourage a convergence of ideas regarding appropriate cut scores.

At the end of each two-day session, BETA/TASA took the judgements of each panelist and calculated descriptive statistics—such as the mean, the median, and standard errors—for the recommended cut scores for each PE by age and assessment (Participation and Supported Independence). These statistics were then presented to various MI-Access Committees—including the CAC, the SRC, and the TAC—for review and feedback. The OSE/EIS took the feedback from the committees, synthesized it, and made cut score recommendations to Mr. Thomas Watkins, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the Michigan State Board of Education.

## **MI-ACCESS REPORTS**

IDEA 1997 requires states to report alternate assessment data in the same frequency and manner as the general state assessment. Therefore, MI-Access results are reported similar to MEAP results. Using the assessment data provided by the districts, the MI-Access operational contractor produces a variety of reports at the state, district, school, and classroom levels. (See Table 3.)

TABLE 3

Report	State	District	School	Classroom
Summary Reports*	X	X		
Listing Reports		X	X	X
Frequency Reports*	X	X	X	
District Participation Rate Reports		X		
School Participation Rate Reports			X	
Parent Reports			X	
Individual Student Reports				X
Disaggregated Summary Reports*	X	X		
Student Labels			X	

\*These reports will be provided only when ten or more students of the same age take part in the same assessment.

The reports are returned either to the District Superintendent or the District MI-Access Coordinator depending on the option chosen by the district. To preserve student anonymity, summary reports are provided only in those districts where ten or more students of the same age take part in the assessment. Certain reports—including the Listing Reports, Summary Reports, and Participation Rate Reports—will also be rolled up to produce corresponding state reports.

## COMMUNICATION AND RESEARCH EFFORTS

### Communication Efforts

Because MI-Access is an entirely new state assessment program, the MDE has been actively communicating with professionals, parents, and other interested parties to keep them apprised of new developments. Internally within the MDE and externally with educators and parents, OSE/EIS has engaged in one-on-one briefing sessions; made presentations at numerous meetings and conferences (in Michigan and nationally); developed two award winning educational videos (one to introduce MI-Access and one to show teachers and other special education professionals how to conduct an observation); and produced an instructional interactive CD-ROM.

In addition, it has developed a wide range of other communication tools designed to inform and keep interested stakeholders up to date, including

- *The Assist*, a bi-monthly newsletter;
- an on-line subscription to *The Assist*;
- a MI-Access Coordinator Listserv;
- the MI-Access toll-free hotline (1-888-382-4246);
- a MI-Access E-mail address (mi-access@tasa.com);
- a special MI-Access assessment section on the MDE web site;
- media briefing packets;
- a communication guide for schools and districts;
- a reporting handbook and accompanying CD-ROM;
- an administration manual for coordinators and assessment administrators;
- a guide for communicating with external audiences about assessment results (currently under development);
- annual MI-Access training conferences;
- pre-service kits for institutes of higher education (currently under development); and
- on-line communication devices to encourage sustained learning and enable teachers to talk with one another about MI-Access (currently under development).

The MDE will continue to use these communication tools and develop others in an effort to ensure that all parties involved in MI-Access have the information they need to make it an effective assessment program.

### **Research Efforts**

The MDE has taken great care in developing MI-Access assessments. It realizes, however, that every program can be improved through continuous monitoring, feedback from the field, and research. With regard to the latter, OSE/EIS is currently engaged in a wide-scale research effort to determine the reliability of MI-Access raters. This project—which is being conducted in cooperation with Western Michigan University and BETA—should help answer the question of inter-rater reliability—something that is always of concern with assessments based on observations, which are subject to greater subjectivity than paper and pencil assessments.

OSE/EIS also plans to research

- IEPT assessment decision-making (to answer such questions as: are the Teams using the information provided by the state to make decisions about which assessments students should take, what information is most helpful, and what information is missing?); and
- the usefulness of results (to answer such questions as: are the reports understandable, are they having an impact on student learning, how are they being used to guide instruction and curriculum, and are they encouraging partnerships between parents and educators to advance student performance?).

As other issues arise, OSE/EIS will use research as a tool to strengthen MI-Access and ensure that it is useful in helping teachers teach and students learn.